

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**Week of March 30, 1998**

NRCS, Office of Legislative Affairs
 Room 5121 South Agriculture Bldg.
 (202) 720-2771

For additional information contact:

Tia Young
 Douglas E. Williams
 Douglas J. McKalip

LAST WEEK:**HOUSE EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS MARK-UP -**

Last week, the House Appropriations Committee marked up and reported H.R.3579 and H.R. 3580, each making supplemental appropriations for FY 1998. The contents each bill are attached to this summary.

SENATE FLOOR CONSIDERATION OF SUPPLEMENTAL

APPROPRIATIONS -Last week, the Senate Considered S. 1768, a bill making supplemental appropriations for FY 1998. After numerous amendments and several days of debate, the Senate approved the bill upon its "third reading". Senate leaders have indicated that the bill will be formally passed only after action has taken place in the House of Representatives. Key components of the legislation include \$50 million for EWP. An extensive explanation of the bill is attached to this summary.

SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE BRIEFING ON ANIMAL WASTE-

On Thursday, Fee Busby and EPA staff briefed the Senate Agriculture Committee on the Draft Strategy for regulating Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Committee questions centered upon the direct impact that regulation would have on producers. Many staff members were interested in what programs and assistance could be offered to CAFO operators to help them comply. They also inquired about the number of CAFOs that are estimated to currently be in operation. Other staff asked how the EPA draft strategy would be affected by state initiatives. Presenters responded that the national strategy is established to set a national minimum standard, but that some states would likely impose even more stringent regulations. Congressional staff also voiced concern that the proposed regulations might affect smaller operations than what are presently being discussed.

FOREST SERVICE MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT HEARING -

On Thursday, Three Committees; House Resources, House Budget, and House Appropriations held a joint hearing on the management of the Forest Service. Witnesses included representatives of the General Accounting Office, USDA Office of Inspector General, and Forest Service Chief, Mike Dombek. Members of Congress expressed strong dismay at the level of accountability at the Forest Service. Many cited poor bookkeeping, lack of performance measures, and an absence of a functional financial accounting system as signs that the agency is not wisely spending taxpayer dollars. The General Accounting Office raised several reports and audits over the past decade that have suggested numerous changes. They stated, however, that very few recommendations have ever been put in place. Many Members of Congress expressed displeasure at the size of the agencies budget and the fact that it is projected to lose money in Fiscal Year 1998. Some Committee members suggested that an oversight board needs to be put in place to ensure that the agency is held accountable and can demonstrate better record keeping.

THIS WEEK:

HEARING ON WATER SUPPLY AND QUALITY IN NORTH DAKOTA CANCELED - The Water and Power Subcommittee (Chairman Jon Kyl, R-Arizona) of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee canceled a scheduled hearing on water supply and quality in North Dakota. The hearing has not been rescheduled.

MANAGEMENT OF ANIMAL WASTE - The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Richard Lugar, R-Indiana) will hold a hearing on legislation, H.R. 1323, that would change national standards governing the management of animal waste.

April 2 9:00 a.m. 328-Russell Bldg.

Witnesses: Craig Cox, USDA
Bob Perciasepe, EPA

LOOKING AHEAD:

APRIL RECESS -

Congress will in recess from April 3rd until the week of April 20th.

USDA YEAR 2000 COMPLIANCE - The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Richard Lugar, R-Indiana) will hold a hearing to review USDA's information technology systems to ensure year 2000 compliance.

May 14 9:00 a.m. 328A Russell Bldg.
Witnesses TBA

3/31/98
Comparison of Emergency Spending Measures pending in Congress
(provisions dealing with agriculture)

Senate

S. 1768

Contents

\$2 million for USDA Departmental Administration to resolve Civil Rights cases and complaints.

\$235,000 for the USDA Office of General Counsel to fund additional staff in the Civil Rights Division.

\$21,000,000 in Emergency Disaster Loans

\$60,000,000 for the Emergency Conservation Program

\$4,000,000 for the Dairy and Livestock Disaster Assistance Program

\$50,000,000 for the NRCS Emergency Watershed Program. Note: Bill language earmarks \$10 million specifically for Georgia. A colloquy on the Senate Floor also indicates that \$5 million should be allotted to assist the Chino Dairy Preserve in San Bernardino, CA.

Offsets

-\$502,000 from the FSIS Salaries and Expenses

-\$6,736,197 from the FSA Salaries and Expenses

-\$846,000 from the Rural Housing Service Salaries and Expenses

Present status: Amended and agreed to by the Senate but not passed

House

H.R. 3579

Contents:

\$20 million for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

\$4.7 million for the Tree Assistance Program

\$ 4 million for the Livestock Disaster Assistance Fund

\$6.8 million for the Dairy Indemnity Assistance Program

\$ 65 million for the Emergency Watershed Program (EWP)

\$48 million for State and Private Forestry

Offsets:

The House Legislation is primarily offset by cuts in:

- 1) Bilingual education
- 2) Airports Grants in Aid
- 3) Public Housing for Indians
- 4) Americorps

Note: The bill specifically states that, 'No part of any appropriation contained in this chapter shall remain available for obligation beyond the current fiscal year...'

Present status: on the House floor this week

H.R. 3580

Contents:

\$4.3 million for USDA Departmental Administration

\$ 235,000 for the USDA Office of General Counsel

\$39,448,000 for Direct Farm Ownership Loans

\$25,000,000 for Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loans

\$9,528,000 for Direct Farm Operating Loans

\$40,000,000 for Guaranteed Subsidized Farm Operating Loans

Offsets:

- \$223,000 from the Agriculture Research Service (ARS)
- \$350,000 from the APHIS Salaries and Expenses
- \$25,000 from AMS Marketing Service
- \$38,000 from Packers and Stockyards
- \$502,000 from FSIS
- \$1,080,000 from FSA Salaries and Expenses
- \$378,000 from NRCS Conservation Operations
- \$4 million from the Conservation Farm Option. Note: Committee stated, "The reduction in the program for fiscal year 1998 would still be available for use in fiscal year 1999. The reduction is necessary to help costs for additional guaranteed farm operating loans."
- \$846,000 from Rural Housing Service Salaries and Expenses
- \$114,000 from Food and Nutrition Service

Note: The bill specifically states that, 'No part of any appropriation contained in this chapter shall remain available for obligation beyond the current fiscal year...'

Present status: No action expected until after the April Recess
